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ABSTRACT

This paper includes the description and evaluation of a course in career development for psychology undergraduates. Background information for the course is provided, followed by a description of the three course components which correspond to the three course goals, i.e., increasing knowledge about (1) oneself; (2) educational and occupational opportunities; and (3) occupational implementation skills. The first component focuses on increasing self knowledge and uses several structured paper and pencil exercises, combined with small group discussions, to explore and clarify values, interests, and abilities. The second component centers on the world of work and postgraduate schooling. Student investigations of career possibilities and interviews with persons employed in selected occupations are described. Methods are discussed for helping students explore professional school opportunities in psychology and related fields. The final component on occupational implementation skills emphasizes developing skills in job searching, communicating, resume writing, and interviewing. Texts and selected readings for the course are listed. The effectiveness of the course is described in an evaluation section which includes several direct quotations from students' written evaluations and an analysis of themes present in their statements. (NRB)

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Providing Perspectives and Skills for Career Selection

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Providing Perspectives and Skills for Career Selection

The focus of my presentation will include the description and evaluation of a course in Career Development. Before doing that however, I would like to describe some of the personal and professional background that contributed to the development of this course. In addition I will point out that the course constitutes only one dimension of a program to increase students' career awareness and to assist them in career decision making.

What are some of the relevant factors that contributed to the development of the Career Development course?

My career as a teacher of undergraduate psychology began in the mid 60's. As I recall, my colleagues and I held two salient attitudes. The attitudes were that we possessed a major responsibility for preparing students for doctoral training in psychology and that we possessed no responsibility for preparing students' for post graduate employment. I had no systematic data that would justify generalizing my experience to the majority of other undergraduate teachers of psychology, but my impression was that those attitudes were not uncommon.

Events during the late 60's and early 70's contributed to a change in my attitudes. One of these events consisted of an illustration provided by Walker and McKeachie (1967) in their book Some thoughts about teaching the beginning course in psychology. They recommended that the reader consider "the student who isn't there" when designing a curriculum. I'll use their illustration but substitute data that is current and from Creighton. Last year we had about 750 students in Introductory Psychology. Last year we also had about 75 students

who graduated with a major in psychology. We can predict that about two of those graduates will eventually acquire Ph.D.s in psychology. Thus, those going on for a Ph.D. in psychology constitute significantly less than 1% of those exposed to Introductory Psychology and less than 5% of those who graduated with a major in psychology. By contrast, "the student who isn't there", those who don't a Ph.D. in psychology, constituted either 99%+ of the students in Introductory Psychology or more than 95% of those who majored in Psychology. The salience of Walker and McKeachie's illustration has haunted me for almost 15 years.

The social events of the late 60's also contributed to a change in my attitude toward undergraduate teaching. Some of the themes that pervaded academe during and after that era were relevance, the real world, and credit for experience. In general, those themes did not possess a vocational or career orientation but rather they emphasized social causes, personal concern for others and society, and a desire to confront the world in a direct way. During the early and mid 70's, our institution and others developed and implemented field placement and practicum-type experiences for undergraduates, perhaps as a partial response to the demands of the late 60's.

Developments during the 70's including upheavals in the economy and the emergence of the women's movement have emphasized the importance of employment immediately after graduation for all who want it. Moreover, a review of the 1970's literature on teaching undergraduate psychology reveals two distinct career-related interests. There are those who focused on the employment patterns

of undergraduate psychology majors (Cates, 1973; Lunneborg, 1974; Titley, 1978) and those who proposed curricular adjustment to prepare psychology majors for post graduate employment (Caffrey et al, 1977; Korn & Nodine, 1975; Pinkus & Korn, 1973; Thomas, 1975). Thus the legacy of the 70's may be an insistance on knowing what a student can do with a major in psychology and what psychology faculty can do to prepare students for post graduate living.

Answers to the question about what a student can do with a major in psychology have been published by several authors (Cates, 1973; Davis, 1979; Lunneborg, 1974; Titley, 1978; Ware & Meyer, 1981) and will not be dealt with in this presentation, except to note that investigators have consistently demonstrated the career versatility and adaptability of the psychology major. The primary purpose of this presentation is to address the question of what psychology faculty can do. I propose a comprehensive program of career development.

A comprehensive program consists of several dimensions that need not be limited to what we've done at Creighton. Janet described many of things we do that have career development themes. The Colloquium Series has provided student psychologist models as well as information about the discipline. The psychology club brings students and faculty together in less formal ways to socialize. The field placement provides students with first hand experience of the type encountered by some psychologists. The academic advising and career workshops provide students with supportive experiences and information

that is relevant to their individual circumstances. Finally, brochures that describe what one can do with and as a psychology major as well as one that describes how to go about applying to graduate school provide students with printed information to frequently asked questions. Finally the career development course provides a semester long academic and experiential approach for career planning. Two major advantages of such a comprehensive program are that it addresses the range of students' problems and it actively involves most if not all of the faculty in the process of student career development.

At this point I would like to provide some background about the course and then describe the course itself.

Course in Career Development

The course was first offered in the department in 1977 and has been offered once a year since then. However, we encountered persistent staffing problems. In short we found that those persons with formal graduate level training, usually from counseling programs, don't care to come or stay in undergraduate academic positions. About three years ago the following alternatives arose either we drop the Career Development course or have someone in the department gear up him/herself to teach it. It was under those circumstances that I took over the course.

Professionally, there has been a rapid growth in courses and programs in career development during the decade of the 70's (Haney & Howland, 1978). However, the bulk of the research has been at the precollege level (Super and Hall, 1978). At the college level, there are relatively few reports that evaluated the effectiveness of those courses and most have failed to include a no

treatment control group (Evans & Rector, 1978; Heppner & Krause, 1979; Touchton, Wertheimer, Cornfeld, & Harrison, 1977). The literature gated the effectiveness of a career development course (Babcock & Kaufman, 1976; Ware, 1981; and Ware & Beischel, 1979).

Course Description: The course consists of three components corresponding to the three goals of the course, including increasing knowledge about one's self, about educational/occupational opportunities, and about occupational implementation skills.

I use about half a dozen structured paper and pencil exercises to get students to explore and clarify their values, interests, and abilities. The exercises are completed outside of class. Small group discussion of the results of the exercises provides an atmosphere to foster acknowledgement and support. Students complete the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1974) and the System for Career Decision-Making (Harrington & O'Shea, 1980) during the first and middle parts of the semester respectively. Those two inventories summarize students' personal characteristics and relate them in employment alternatives. Moreover, students complete paper and pencil exercises to evaluate the adequacy of the match between prospective careers and their interests and abilities.

The second course component centers on the world of work and post graduate school. The students conduct and in-depth investigation of one career derived from each inventory by using the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1977) and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (1980). Students conduct an in-depth investigation of one career derived from each inventory by using the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1977) and the Occupational

Outlook Handbook (1980). Finally, students conduct two structured interviews with persons who work in the occupations that they selected. The interview asks about the specific duties performed, the degree of pressure (stress) associated with the position, effects of this work on one's health, major satisfactions/dissatisfactions associated with the work, etc. Students write a summary report about each interview.

Exploration of graduate/professional school opportunities focuses on post graduate work in psychology and related disciplines. I invite six speakers to come to class during the semester. They describe their work activities, graduate preparation, and career satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The six consist of three doctoral level psychologists with one each from clinical, counseling, and industrial/organizational psychology. The remaining three are trained at the master's level and include one person each from psychology, social work and college student personnel. Moreover, I devote four 50-minute periods to the topics of searching for, preparing for and applying to graduate school in psychology. I illustrate how the principles associated with each process are generalizable to professional school. Finally, during one class period pre-health science and pre-law advisors address issues specific to admissions to medical/dental and law schools.

The last component of the course addresses occupational implementation skills. Attention is given to developing skills at job searching, communicating, resume writing and interviewing. Moreover, all students are required to submit a formal resume and participate in a simulated video taped interview. I give each

student an evaluation of his/her interview performance and provide each with an opportunity to watch the taped interview.

Texts for the course include Figler (1979) and Super and Super (1976). Students are also required to read selected portions from Figler (1975), Powell (1978) and Woods (1979).

Evaluation. I was actively involved in evaluating the course for two years prior to teaching it. The initial evaluation can be found in the Teaching of Psychology (Ware & Beischel, 1979). A subsequent and more comprehensive evaluation was reported in the Teaching of Psychology (Ware, 1981). I will briefly describe the more recent study and then present qualitative findings that have not been published heretofore. The Ware (1981) study consists of data acquired from students at the university during the spring of 1979 and 1980.

The participants included a total of 148 junior and senior students. The 31 psychology majors who enrolled in the course constituted the experimental (E) group. A total of 59 psychology majors who were not in the course made up the control, major (CM) group. A total of 29 non psychology majors who were not in the course made up the control, non major (CNM) group. There was a slightly greater percent of males than females in each of the groups. Thus, the primary variable in this study was the treatment variable consisting of E, CM, and CNM groups. Seven pre- and post-test measures were used to evaluate the course. In summary, students taking the course reported significantly greater increases in knowledge about themselves, the world of work, and implementation skills, increases in information seeking thoughts and behavior, and increases in career maturity.

I also evaluated students' reactions to the course by having them rate the course on several dimensions as well as by having them provide a written description of what they had learned from the course and how their attitudes toward post graduate education and for employment were influenced by the course.

The final phase of evaluation was one that I completed only recently. What follows are direct quotations from the students' written evaluations. I have organized the remarks into three areas corresponding to the course goals. After each set of quotations I will identify themes derived from the students' statements.

Self Discovery

> "The first section of the course the 'knowledge of self' part, was beneficial for me since it provided an opportunity to evaluate myself and my perception of myself. I think a large number of people are reluctant to elaborate on their good points, and I am no exception. The exercises provided me with a chance to learn how to talk about myself without feeling guilty or embarassed about it. The discussions of the results in the small group setting also enhanced these aspects of my own personal evaluation and development."

> "These (self exploration) exercises gave me a broader perspective on what I can and can not do. I found out that I have interests in science, art and music but was more skilled in teaching and managerial skills. This opened up something I had not previously even thought of."

> "The first day of class, we were all asked what we hoped to get out of this course. My response was that when I was asked the question, "What are you going to do with a Psychology degree?", I could give an intellectually sound answer. At the time I knew I wanted a psychology degree because I saw much of my life centering around psychology. Yet, I had other interests which I wanted to try. For example, I have always had an interest in the arts and fashion. At the time I did not see the correlation between psychology and my secret interests. After taking the first self inventory test, these 'secret' interests proved to be a domineering part

in my life. But, I did not know how to fit it all together. I learned that by taking some courses in journalism/communications my degree could be highly marketable in the field of fashion and business."

"I didn't think I could do many things well at all. Through activities in this class, I have found many things I can do and I am not ashamed to admit them. More importantly, I learned about transferrable skills. There are things I do every day that I can apply to the world of work. It was important to me to find this out because now I think that I have a lot more to offer a perspective employer than I was aware of before."

"My attitudes toward employment for women, especially (the conflict between the practice of medicine) and family life have been altered through the semester. I have come to the realization that one can limit the amount of time that he/she spends on the job without limiting the amounts of what he/she can contribute to that job. The resolution of these conflicting ideas has led to my commitment to attempt to enter medical school."

I detected the following themes. The students indicated that the course: helped to clarify and verify self impressions; allowed them to acknowledge "hidden" impressions; provided an opportunity to resolve conflicts; enhanced their self-confidence.

Post Graduate Education and the World of Work

The following quotations express views toward post graduate education.

"My attitude towards post graduate education on the whole has only been more firmly established. My desire for a post graduate degree has altered from a shaky possibility of attending medical school to a firm commitment to this goal."

"My attitudes toward post graduate education have not really changed much, but they have definitely become more solidified as a result of this course. When I started this course I was wishy-washy in my plans to go to medical school. I thought very seriously about attending graduate school in psychology. I took a closer look into psychology and decided that I really wanted to go to medical school."

"When I went into this course I was still tentatively thinking about medicine. During the semester I pretty much decided against medicine. However, I began to think more seriously about graduate school. I was able to identify several areas that may interest me, both within and outside of psychology. I thought about counseling psy, and perhaps organizational/ industrial. I never really considered graduate school, only professional school. I'm taking it much more seriously."

"I still want to do post graduate work after college but I no longer feel it is absolutely necessary to plunge into graduate school the instant I obtain my. B.A. The notion of waiting a year and getting a variety of things in my life straightened out (marriage?) seem much more plausible and were, in fact, reinforced by the statistics that I read. I don't really know if I will wait before entering graduate school but I do now that if I decide to wait, I won't be struck down by inconquerable guilt."

"Your presentations provided realistic information including the option to take a year or two to work and to feel myself out as if that is really what I want to do."

"I feel more assured about the path I was and am going to follow. I am graduating in December and have a job lined up for January 1982. I was apprehensive about doing this because most people I know are continuing their education immediately, without a break. After taking the course I saw that taking time out to work can actually be beneficial in making it into a graduate school because of first hand experience."

"During the course I went through a change and am now comfortable with my new plans. That is, being a full time mother and working part time to keep in touch with the working world until my child (or children) are in school."

I detected the following themes: The students indicated that the course: firmed up a feeling about going to professional school; changed opinions regarding post graduate education; reduced pressure to pursue post graduate education immediately; discovered that being a mother is OK and is part of a career; reduced reactions such as guilt and anxiety to post graduate plans.

The following quotations express views regarding a first full time job following graduation.

> "I think the most important thing I learned in this section is that I have been thinking in a very narrow-minded manner. I no longer think of myself as having one occupational option the rest of my life."

> "I think the most important thing I found out for myself was when I realized I wasn't limited to one area and I wasn't limited to my first job for life - or that I had to have my first job be a "perfect one".

> "Another thing that I have found out is that you don't have to graduate and be working at one job for the rest of your life. My parents have always stressed to pick a job and go after it. This is not a good idea and I have always felt that something was not right about taking that attitude. In this course I have learned that you can try out different jobs until you have found one that has met your own personal needs."

The following quotations express views regarding employment options.

> "It opened up to me a wide range of alternatives to graduate school. I have never had experience in the business world but I learned that I possess many qualifications that could give me a rewarding career in business if I so choose."

> "The thing I didn't know before the course was that you could do so much with an undergraduate degree in Psychology. I found out that the avenues were endless. Another thing that could be used as a sub-head to this would be what I can do with a law degree. So often you hear "lawyers are starving". Well the ones that are must have no initiative, or be dead.

> "By gaining knowledge of various careers. I realized that there are many careers in this world that I would be happy to pursue and that not getting into dental school is not the end of the world. This knowledge served to relieve my many pressures and anxieties and gave me reassurance about my future.

I detected the following themes: The students indicated that the course: provided career alternatives that were unknown to them previously; reduced the anxiety level associated with career plans.

Job Acquisition Skills

The following quotations express views regarding the exercises of writing a resume and participating in a simulated interview.

> "I have found that reviewing my values and abilities sheets just prior to an interview makes it easeir for me to talk about myself during an interview, and to come across with greater confidence in myself. That is one thing I definitely could not do before this course. And although it is still difficult to speak highly of myself, I now realize that it is possible to maintain your positive assets without feeling as though you are bragging on yourself."

> "The interviews helped to ease my anxiety level enough to know that I can actually talk freely to someone for a long period of time and I can feel quite comfortable asking questions to someone I don't know."

> "The simulated interviews and the skills we learned in preparing for them were probably the best parts of this course. They were the most practical for the future and I feel that I am now a step ahead of future applications and that confidence and the skills I have now could be an important deciding factor in helping me stand apart from the rest. Before this course, I had no idea of how to fill out a resume. I now feel that I have a very good background."

> "Another important thing I learned is how to write a resume. I was scared to death at this prospect and never thought I could do it. Well, I did. The important thing is that I now possess the skills and if I have to revise it or write a whole new one, I can do it alone."

> "The idea of doing an interview terrified me; even a simulated one. But I decided to try it thinking the experience would do me good. I was amazed with myself. I was not half as terrified or nervous when I was doing it as I thought I would be. Now, when I am asked "What are you going to do with a Psychology degree?", I can say exactly what and how I intend to do it. Besides having an answer to this question, I feel that I have more confidence in what I am doing and where I want to go."

I detected the following themes. The students indicated that the course: served as a desensitization function toward the propsect of undertaking a job interview; increased confidence

toward resume writing and interviewing.

Summary

The results of these descriptive statements give me increased confidence in asserting that the Career Development course can provide students with perspectives about oneself, the world of work and career implementation skills. Moreover students indicate that the course serves to help them reduce anxiety, guilt and fear associated with their stage of career development. Other teachers of psychology can be optimistic about the outcomes of offering similar courses at their institutions.

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